

MILBERGER LANDSCAPE & NURSERY

THE GARDENING NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS

MARCH 2022

PLANT QUESTIONS

We like zinnias for cut flowers and as a nectar source for butterflies.

Should we pull the snapdragons in the flower garden to make room for zinnias?

We also like zinnias, but the snapdragons probably still have a month and a half of good blooming left. Leave the snaps that look good and gradually replace them with zinnias.

Is it time to plant tomatoes? Why don't I see too many heirloom varieties in local vegetable gardens?

March is good time to put in your tomato plants. The tomato varieties that work best in our two short growing seasons are determinate varieties that set fruit in the heat. One heirloom tomato that has been a successful performer is Cherokee Purple.

When will the bluebonnets bloom? They are beginning to bloom in the southern part of the region. But hold on: the main bloom period will be in early April.

If you have gardening or landscaping questions we have the answers. Just ask any of the friendly, knowledgeable, and experienced nursery staff at Milberger's Nursery.



Camellias are flowering evergreens with glossy, deep green foliage that make a striking foundation shrub that require only morning sun.

They will give you big blooms in shades of white, pink and red from fall through spring when many plants in your garden go dormant. They can grow between 10 and 25 feet tall and 6 and 10 feet wide, depending on the variety.

GARDENING EXPERTISE

Spectacular Southern Shrubs

Camellias are gorgeous bloomers. They're longtime residents of gardens and yards across the state that add beautiful, long-lasting color thanks to their lengthy flowering seasons. Beyond their lush blooms, these shrubs grow tall and broad, offering shade with their glossy, deep green leaves. Most Texas gardeners are familiar with the winter- and spring-blooming camellias (*Camellia japonica*). There are also fall-blooming hybrids, (*Camellia sasanqua*), all of which have their own planting and tending requirements. While these shrubs are grown widely in the South, camellias do require some care, so keep an eye out and make sure you're not making mistakes when tending to camellias in your yard.

(SEE TIPS ON AVOIDING CAMELLIA MISTAKES ON PAGE THREE)

Our web site and the email version of this newsletter contain many color photographs, how-to-do-it diagrams, more complete articles, links to many gardeners references and many more answers to your gardening and landscape questions. Visit www.MilbergerNursery.com to sign up. We respect your privacy and we will not share your address or information with anyone not associated with this newsletter.

GARDENING EVENTS at the NURSERY

Sat., March 5 – 10am 'til 11:30

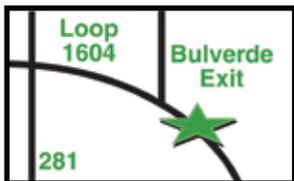
Spring Vegetable Gardening. FREE Adult Seminar hosted by David Rodriguez, from the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Take the mystery and difficulty out of producing your own home-grown vegetables. Learn what varieties grow best in our South Texas environments; how to plant them and how to take care of them until harvest time. David will answer your specific questions about your garden. Bring a notebook.

Sat., March 26 – 10am 'til 3pm

Milberger's Blood Drive. Give the gift of life. The South Texas Blood and Tissue Center will be here at the nursery to conduct our spring Blood Drive. Your donation could save the life of someone in need. Appointments are encouraged but walk-ins are welcome. Go to <https://donor.southtexasblood.org/donor/schedules/geo> to schedule your appointment or call 210-757-9505.

Sat. March 26 – 10am 'til 3pm

FREE Vision Screening for Kids. Milberger's Nursery is hosting Lions Club's KidSight MOBILE EYE SCREENING UNIT where you can have your kids' vision screened by trained and State certified Lions using a small hand-held camera. In just a few seconds, this non-evasive method quickly detect early vision problems. For children 6 months to 5 years old. Bring your used Eyeglasses for the Lions Club to recycle. Contact Pantusa, 210-326-3915



To find us:
Take the Bulverde Exit off of Loop 1604. The entrance to Milberger's is next to the Circle K gas station.

Milberger's Landscape Nursery

Open 9:00 to 6:00 Monday to Saturday
And 10:00 to 5:00 on Sundays

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(210) 497-3760

Or on the World Wide Web at
www.milbergernursery.com
nursery@milbergersa.com

Our Writers have the answers: **Dr. Jerry Parsons** is a well renown Horticulture Specialist who is retired from the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in San Antonio; **Dr. Calvin Finch** is the retired Director of Water Conservation and Technology at the Texas A&M University System. The Gardening Newsletter for South Central Texas is edited by **Marc Hess** at mhess@hctc.coop.

**Milberger's Nursery
March Features**

Milberger's Landscape Nursery

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Visit our website, and check our advertisements in the *San Antonio Express News* for our great anniversary sale items.

**Get Paid to Plant a Tree
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To have your gardening questions answered during show hours ONLY

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GARDENING EXPERTISE

Avoiding Four Big Camellia Growing Mistakes

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

Although the best location for camellias is a partially shaded site, camellias will tolerate either shade or full sun, though growth will be spindly and blooming will be reduced in dense shade, and leaf scorch can result in full sun. Flower color and growth is the best under the partial shade of tall trees. Plant camellias no deeper than they were grown in the container, digging the hole twice to three times as wide. Planting too deep is a good way to kill a camellia. If you have heavy clay soil, plant high and bring soil in to cover the root ball.



Prune **camellias**, if needed, right after flowering in spring and early summer. Since camellias are rather slow growing, do not prune too heavily.

“The camellia is considered by some to be the queen of evergreen shrubs in the South and Southwest. If only for its beauty of leaf and bloom, the camellia deserves a more prominent place in our landscape but it must be handled carefully.”

~ Dr. Jerry Parson

Mistake 1: Underwatering Young Plants.

Regular watering is critical during the first year. Water thoroughly to moisten the entire root ball; then let the top of the root ball go slightly dry. Once camellias are established, they require much less supplemental watering.

Mistake 2: Overwatering Established Plants.

Once camellias are growing comfortably, they can thrive on their own with very little watering. Make sure the soil is well drained.

Mistake 3: Planting in Winter or Summer.

In South Texas it's best to plant camellias in spring or fall. Planting camellias in spring allows the shrubs' root systems to develop before the cold weather sets in.

Mistake 4: Giving Camellias Full Sun.

While well-established camellias can take some direct sunlight, younger shrubs require partial shade to thrive. It's a good idea to plant them beneath a canopy of taller trees or near a structure that will provide shade from beaming afternoon sunlight. If they receive too much sun, their leaves will scorch and burn.

Ask the gardening experts at Milberger's Nursery for suggestions that will help get your garden into full bloom. You will find healthy plant stock, good advice and creative suggestions for your spring and summer landscape and gardening needs. To see what is on sale each week visit our web site at www.milbergernursery.com.

LAWNCARE

Time to Top Dress and Aerate Your Lawn

By Dr. Calvin Finch, retired Conservation Director, SAWS, and Horticulturist

Top dressing and aeration are really a magical elixir for a tired lawn. You will notice the benefits within weeks and all through the summer. Aeration is accomplished by running a machine across the grass that penetrates to cut out plugs of turf and soil about three inches deep. There are also spike-type aerators, but they are not quite as effective. Aeration is the best way to treat compacted soil. Top dressing increases the benefit of the aeration and is good exercise. The top dressing compost penetrates the aeration holes to bring organic material down into the root zone.

Compost still allows the air and water to penetrate plus stimulates microbial activity that improves soil structure. Your soil supply store may try to sell you top dressing made up of sand and compost. For the same price, compost is more effective. The sand is filler. The only time I would recommend a sand-laced top dressing is if you wanted to fill rough areas in the lawn. This is also a good time to apply a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent summer weeds. Crabgrass and sand burs are two of the worst pests. Pre-emergent herbicides prevent seeds from germinating for 2-4 months if the granules are spread evenly and the soil is not disturbed once the chemical forms a barrier in the soil.

Organic gardeners are excited about corn gluten as a herbicide. Apply it as evenly as possible in a weed-infested area just as the first summer weeds germinate

(March or April). The herbicide action only lasts for two weeks or less but the material will get rid of the weeds that are already germinated when they are young. Do not waste your money on Weed and Feed yet. The timing is not right in the South to apply fertilizer and herbicide at the same time.

The best way to control the winter weeds in your lawn is to keep them mowed. Mowing keeps the lawn neat and prevents the weeds from going to seed. You can apply a contact herbicide as long as the weeds are actively growing, but read the product label carefully to be sure that you get the right herbicide for the weed you are trying to kill.



Lawn aeration loosens up compacted soil and allows air and water to penetrate soil channels and stimulate the root growth that will help generate a lush grass cover. It may take you less than an hour to aerate your lawn and the benefits will last the whole year and beyond.

Looking for turf grass? Visit Milberger's sample lawn areas. You are invited to examine and walk on these sample lawn areas to help you determine the look and feel of the turf you prefer. We also have information and specification sheets on the different sods on our web site. Visit our web site MilbergerNursery.com and look under TURF GRASS AND SOD.

IN YOUR VEGETABLE GARDEN

Everyone Can Grow Vegetables

By D. Hairlloyde, The Accidental Gardener



Selecting an appropriate garden site is essential to the success of a garden. The ideal area is exposed to full or near-full sunlight, with deep well-drained, fertile soil. The location should be near a water source and free of competition from existing shrubs or shade trees. With the thoughtful site preparation and careful selection of adaptable crops and varieties, your back yard vegetable garden can become quite productive.

Vegetable gardening in Central Texas has challenges as well as many rewards. The summers are hot and humid compared to other parts of the country, but the winters are mild so you can grow vegetables year round.

Growing vegetables can be easy and it can be hard. Weather, pests, and diseases often get in the way of perfect veggies. But with a little knowledge and some consistent tending to your garden you can be successful. Successful vegetable growing depends on adapting to the soil and the weather. Choosing vegetables that grow well in this environment is important. It is also important to shield more delicate vegetables from the intense heat that summers may bring.

☘ Pick the sunniest site. Vegetables need sunlight. There's no negotiating that, and there's nothing you can add that will make up for it. Find a spot where the sun shines directly for at least 10 hours each day.

☘ Provide perfect drainage. No vegetable crop grows well in waterlogged soil. You can always add water when plants are dry, but when it rains for several days in a row, you need to be sure the excess water will drain away from your plants' roots. The easiest way is to plant in raised beds. Elevate your garden by just 5 or 6 inches and you'll solve all the problems.

☘ Prepare the soil carefully. Organic matter is your key to success. Add 5 or 6 inches of a blend of sphagnum peat moss, compost, well-rotted manure, finely ground bark mulch and other organic matter and rototill to a depth of 12 inches. If you're amending a clay soil, include 1 inch of expanded shale as well. Each time you rework the soil for a new season, add an additional two or three inches of organic matter and rototill again.

Want to learn more? Join us for our **FREE Adult Seminar on Spring Vegetable Gardening** at the nursery on **Sat., March 5** starting at **10am**. A&M AgriLife Extension Agent David Rodriguez will help you lay out a strategy for your spring garden. Learn what varieties grow best in South Texas, how to plant them and take care of them until it's time to harvest.

TREES AND SHRUBS

A New Focus on Citrus Trees

By David Abrego, SAWS Conservation Consultant

There are several fruit trees that are well-adapted to our climate. Choose wisely and you'll be enjoying the fruits of your labor before you know it. If you've had the privilege of tasting fruit collected with your own hands, you know it's worth the time and effort of planting a fruit tree.

Of course, being able to actually enjoy the fruits of your labor depends on a few important factors. You'll want a citrus tree that suits our climate, flourishing in spring and summer and completing its reproductive cycle before it gets cold around mid-November.

The type and depth of your soil, as well as its nutrients and pH should be considered before you settle on a particular citrus tree as most prefer well-drained soil and a bright, sunny spot in your landscape.

Although certain citrus fruit trees are cold sensitive and require a bit of care, there are several that are well-adapted to our climate.

Satsuma is the most popular citrus in San Antonio and has adapted very well to our climate.



Satsumas are a variety of mild mandarin oranges that are the hardiest of the citrus varieties and the easiest to grow in Central Texas. Among the sweetest citrus varieties they are also the easiest variety to peel. Containerized satsumas can be moved into the garage to protect them during prolonged periods of cold. Dr. Ying Doon Moy (shown above) worked with Dr. Jerry Parsons, to hybridize and to produce a Satsuma hybrid that would grow well in Central Texas. (PlantAnswers photo.)

Seedless, easy-to-peel fruit and small stature make it a favorite in the home landscape. Common varieties include Miho, Owari, Seto and brand new cultivars Orange Frost and Arctic Frost.

ChangSha is a tangerine variety of satsuma that has been modified to make it more appealing to consumer taste. It produces large quantities of fruit. Originally, the fruits contained many seeds and the tree was very thorny. Newer varieties contain fewer seeds and have a more upright growth habit.

While not truly a citrus **Kumquat** is ideal for small spaces and produces small fruits with an edible peel

that's sometimes sweeter than the pulp. Unlike true citrus, kumquat typically produces throughout the year. Also, it does very well in containers.

In recent years, other citrus trees such as **Mexican lime** (*Citrus aurantifolia*), **Meyer's** improved lemon, grapefruit, navel orange and Valencia orange have increased in popularity in San Antonio; however, be careful with these varieties as cold temperatures can do a lot of damage.

Milberger's has the largest selection of fresh, well-rooted trees in the area. Our South Texas landscape and tree experts can give you advice on which A&M recommended trees would be most suitable for your landscape. Visit our web site at www.MilbergerNursery.com and click through to our on-line tree lot for section and planting guidelines.

MARCH GARDENING TIPS

The Gardener's Favorite Time for Planting

By Dr. Jerry Parsons

March is a major gardening month in our area. The weather stabilizes and by the end of the month it is warm enough to consider the warm weather plants. The average last freeze date occurs during mid-month. This is the time to prepare beds for planting flowers and vegetables. You may want to go in with a neighbor and rent a tiller for this laborious task—of course a shovel or spading fork will do the same job, it's just harder.

Garden Color: March is great geranium month. Use them in morning sun. You can cut tulip foliage down as soon as it is unattractive because they probably won't come back. On daffodils, Dutch iris and other low-chill bulbs, however, leave the foliage until it turns brown. The green leaves are replenishing the bulbs for next year's blooms. Fall-planted pansies, snapdragons, dianthus, stocks, alyssum and larkspur are spectacular this month. It is not too late to plant daylilies and irises if they are well rooted in containers. And March is a month to plant the gardener's favorite vegetables such as tomatoes, sweet corn and snap beans and pepper as well as cucumbers, lima or butter beans, cantaloupe, okra, southern peas, pumpkin, squash, peanuts and watermelon.

Prune: If you didn't get around to pruning your spring flowering and evergreen shrubs during February, do it in early March.

Lawn Care: March is a good month for aeration and adding a half-inch of compost as a soil dressing. It's still too early to fertilize the lawn. It may begin to green up, but the root systems are not fully active until warmer weather arrives. Tune up the lawnmower and be sure the blade is very sharp. Dull blades tear the grass, sharp ones cut it.

Fertilize: Early March is the ideal time to fertilize landscape plants because you give them food just before the spring growing season starts. Use a pre-plant application of a slow release fertilizer analysis such as 19-5-9 at the rate of 3 pounds per 100 square feet of garden planting area.

Be On the Lookout for: a spectacular spring wildflower display. The spring months in South central Texas are perhaps best known for their many, many wildflowers.

For more detailed and complete Gardening Tips for this month visit www.MilbergerNursery.com.

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Just write your email address on the line below and hand it to one of the friendly folks who work at the nursery. Or you can mail it to us at Milberger's Nursery, 3920 North Loop 1604, San Antonio, TX 78347. (You can stop your subscription at any time you choose.)

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We always respect your privacy. Your email address will never be shared with anyone who is not associated with Milberger's Nursery.

HOW TO

Plant Roses

To begin, roses need to be grown in full sun. They like to be in soil that is well-amended with organic matter and has good soil drainage. A raised flower bed with additional compost is a great place for a rose. Starting with healthy soil will prevent you from needing to fertilize much later on.

- 🌱 Know the type of rose you are planting. Hybrid tea and grandiflora roses usually are spaced 24 to 36 inches apart and Floribundas usually are spaced 18 to 24 inches apart.
- 🌱 Soak the roots of the rose plants in a bucket or tub of water for several hours before planting or wrap the plants in clean wet sacks to allow the roots and stems to absorb all the moisture they can.
- 🌱 Dig individual holes at least 12" to 24" inches deep. Firm the soil with the hands, then form a mound with the top of the cone about three inches below bed level.

For a complete rose planting guide visit our web site MilbergerNursery.com and click on the Roses selection under the Gardening Center tab.



After the roots are covered with soil, fill the hole with water and allow it to drain away; then refill with water. After the water is drained away the second time, fill the hole with soil, mounding it slightly above the bed level to allow for settling. At this point the base of the bud union should be about two inches above the soil level.



Knock Out® Roses set a new standard for disease resistance and little maintenance is required to keep your roses thriving. This rose bush is self-cleaning, black spot resistant, and drought tolerant. Of all the rose varieties available they are easy to grow and don't require special care. You can plant them individually among shrubs, annuals and perennials in mixed beds and borders. Plant them in large groups to create a colorful hedge or along a foundation to provide a bright border. They thrive as container plants on your patio. For best performance you should cut them back every year in early spring after the last threat of frost has passed.